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ABSTRACT

Analysis of data from Kekchi, a head-marking language following Mayan patterns, can provide insight into case relations and pronominal reference in head-marking languages. Tensed verb constructions are examined, focusing attention on how the verb stem can determine both the number of referents and their semantic roles. The language's predication system (attributive and tensed verb) is described, and Mayan pronoun functions are outlined. Antecedent placement and the hierarchical status of the verb complex are discussed. These facts about Kekchi are noted: (1) Kekchi person markers underspecify the argument structure of a predication; (2) this referential inadequacy of person markers, which depend on the transivity of the verb for their proper interpretation, is a distinguishing feature of the language; (3) full Kekchi nominals, unmarked for case, are optional adjuncts to the verb; their occurrence is determined by nonsyntactic factors; and (4) Kekchi is a nonconfigurational language. It is concluded that all nonconfigurational languages must be considered as the descriptions of predication and reference are refined. (MSE)

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Mayan Verb Complex Anaphora

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MAYAN VERB COMPLEX ANAPHORA

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Now well known, government is an important linguistic concept with a long history in our discipline. In recent years, discussions of the typological distinction between head-marking and dependent-marking languages have enriched our understanding of government, and, in general, data from non-configurational languages is attracting increased attention. Since government impinges on our ideas of case and on our theories of reference, we seek a fuller understanding of the facts of case relations and pronominal reference in head-marking languages. In this spirit, I speak today. I shall present data from Kekchi, a head-marking language which follows well-attested Mayan patterns.[1] In particular, we shall review tensed verb constructions with an eye to how the verb stem can determine both the number of referents and their semantic roles.

1. Attributive predication

An understanding of Kekchi anaphora begins with a description of the predication system. Mayan predication may be divided into two types: attributive predication and tensed verb predication. An attributive predication can form a single word utterance.[2]

(1) *cili'*
cricket
"it's a cricket"

(2) *ki'*
sweet
"it's sweet"

(3) *kamenaq*
corpse
"it's a corpse" ("it's dead")

Attributives are refering expressions.[3] The reference may be deictic and recoverable from the utterance situation, or it may be anaphoric with an antecedent in the preceding discourse.

More commonly, attributive predication is dyadic. Two forms are juxtaposed in a copular relationship, with the forms' referents standing in either a property or an identity relationship. In such utterances, the reference is anaphoric. The antecedent usually follows the attributive, and it is itself a refering expression. The attributive may be a root noun or a derived noun:[4]

(4) *xʼi' aʼan*
dog that
"it is a dog"

(5) *kwiinq a'an*
man that
"he is a man"

or a root adjective:

(6) *kaq li-c'iic'*
red DEF-manufactured.metal.object
"it is red, the car" ("the car is red")

(7) *nim li-c'iic'*
big DEF-manufactured.metal.object
"it is big, the machete" ("the machete is big")

or even a phrase:

(8) *nimla-'ab l-aakw-ab*
big-hammock DEF-2Es-hammock
"it's a big hammock, your hammock"
("your hammock is a big hammock")

(9) *se'-x-c'ool-a'an kamenaq*
in-E3-heart-that corpse
"it's in that heart of his, a corpse"
("he thinks he (another) is dead")

An attributive may take an absolutive suffix, in which case it makes a deictic reference.

(10) *ixq-at*
woman-A2s
"you're a woman"

(11) *kwiinq-oo*
man-A1p
"we are men"

In a dyadic construction, the attributive and its dependent cannot disagree in reference.

(12) *ixq-at laa'at*
woman-A2s you
"you are a woman"

(13) *us laa'in*
good me
"I am good"

(14) **ixq-at a'an*
woman-A2s that

In Kekchi, attributive predication is the most frequently occurring predication type, and it is the most basic morphological type in the sense that it participates in the other predication type as well. Attributive predication is

found in all Mayan languages, and it is as described here except that for some languages the order of constituents vary.

(Tzotzil) *vinik*
"he is a man"
(McLaughlin 1975: 30)

(Tzotzil) *vinik-on*
man-me
"I am a man"
(McLaughlin 1975: 30)

(Tzotzil) [*baz'i lekl-ek la*] [*s-ba ti ɔɔb-ɔ*]
[very beautiful allegedly] [her-face the girl-yonder]
"that girl's face is said to be very beautiful"
(McLaughlin 1977: 66)

(Chorti) *'imp'uts* [*c'a"ar-en ta-ni-a"otot*]
IN-good [lie-me in-my-house]
"it's good, my lying down in my house"
("I'm being good lying down in my house")
(Fought 1972: 296)

(Chorti) *ha"ax z'i'*
that dog
"that's a dog"
(Fought 1985)

(Yucatec) *winik-en*
man-me
"I am a man"
(Blair 1964: 128)

(Yucatec) *'u-'ámigo-ɔɔ*
his-friend-you
"you are his friend"
(Blair 1964: 129)

2. Tensed verb predication

In Kekchi, a tensed verb predication parallels the structure of a dyadic attributive predication. In an intransitive verb complex, a tense-aspect-mode marker (AUX) optionally bears an absolutive suffix (A), and this is followed by an intransitive verb root or a derived intransitive verb stem (V_{intr}). A transitive verb complex has a transitive verb root or stem (V_{trans}) with an ergative preclitic (E). Thus the structure of the verb complex is either

$$[\overline{V}\ \text{AUX-A E-}V_{intr}] \qquad \text{or} \qquad [\overline{V}\ \text{AUX-A E-}V_{trans}].$$

We may assume that the verb complex is a $\overline{V}$, but we shall return to this point below. In his survey of Kekchi possession, Freeze (1976) illustrates the

use of attributive structures to express verbal embeddings, and he compares these ergative nominalization strategies to their tensed verb counterparts. His glosses indicate an anaphoric contrast, and we will focus on this aspect of tensed verb constructions in the remainder of this paper.

Kekchi provides good examples of the "null anaphora" discussed by Hale (1983). The participant structure of an event is determined to varying degree by the combination of absolutive and ergative markers. Often, it is fully defined by the absolutive-ergative pair, as in these examples:

(15) *x-at-kw-il*
AUX-A2s-E1s-see
"I saw you"

(16) *x-in-aa-sak'*
AUX-A1s-E2s-hit
"you hit me"

(17) *x-in-r-il*
AUX-A1s-E3-see
"it saw me"

(18) *x-in-x-cap*
AUX-A1s-E3-grab
"it grabbed me"

Frequently, a single absolutive or ergative marker suffices to determine both the transitivity of the verb stem and the identity of the participants.[5]

(19) *x-oo-hilah*
AUX-A1p-rest
"we rested"

(20) *x-qa-c'iila*
AUX-E1p-scold
"we scolded him"

(21) it x-oo-c'iilaak
AUX-A1p-scold
"we were scolded"

However, the participant structure may be underdetermined by the person markers, as is illustrated by the following examples:

(22) *x-in-cap*
AUX-1s-grab
"I grabbed him"

(23) *x-in-capok*
AUX-1s-grab
"I grabbed; I did grabbing"

(24) *x-in-cape'*
AUX-1s-grab
"I was grabbed"

In 22, 23, and 24, we see the first person as alternately the agent and the patient, and only one of these three sentences makes a third person reference. These three sentences illustrate the often mentioned paradigm of transitive, antipassive, and passive. The misunderstanding and mysticism surrounding this paradigm and the term "antipassive" merit the attention of a historian of linguistics, but we shall not delve into these matters today. Let us simply say that such role variability is commonplace in a language with ergative case marking, and that in a Mayan language a change of voice is effected via simple derivational suffixes (see Cowan 1969).[6] Because Kekchi has homophonous ergative and absolutive markers with adjacent occurrence slots, the transitivity of the verb stem determines both the number of references and their sense. Since we know *cap* to be a transitive stem (to wit, from example 18, where it takes an ergative prefix), we know that the *in* in *xincap* is an ergative marker and that two references are made, one of which is first person and agentive in nature, and the other of which is a third person patient. Similar coöccurrence patterns define the derived stems *capok* and *cape'* to be intransitive. Although *ok* and *e'* are "detransitivizing" suffixes, other suffixes create transitive stems:

(25) *x-in-jilonk*
AUX-1s-near
"I got near"

(26) *x-in-jilosink*
AUX-1s-near
"I put it nearby"

By repeatedly adding derivational suffixes, we can move verb roots back and forth along an "axis of transitivity" (Fought 1985):

(27) *x-kam*
AUX-die
"he died"

(28) *x-x-kamsih*
AUX-E3-die
"he killed him"

(29) *x-kamsiik*
AUX-die
"he was killed"

These last three examples also illustrate the role of verb stem transitivity in resolving anaphora. The sole referent of 27 is a third person agent; in 29, it is a third person patient. In contrast, 28 makes two references: one to a third person agent, and one to a third person patient. The usual phonetic realizations of the root prefixes in these three examples are identical[7], due to the homophony of the ergative clitic *x* and the AUX *x*. The only sound contrast resides in the verb stem, which thus must account for the attendent contrast in meaning. However, this is not to say that we should attribute person marking function to derivational verb suffixes; that would be silly.

given the semantic load which the absolutive and ergative markers carry in other contexts. Nevertheless, the thematic relations of the referents cannot be determined without knowing the transitivity of the verb stem. The high frequency of third person references in tensed verb predications underscores the importance of verb transitivity as a referential mechanism in Kekchi.

3. Pronoun functions

In English and various other languages, pronouns can have both deictic and anaphoric functions. In Mayan languages, these distinct functions correspond to distinct forms. Paralinguistic cues often accompany deictics, and deictics are often stressed; however these are not defining characteristics of deictic forms.[8] The defining functional difference between deictics and anaphors is that deictics can introduce referents into a discourse, while anaphors must have antecedents (be they preceding or following). In languages such as English, a pronoun without an antecedent is either a deictic or a mistake. In Mayan languages, deictic function is reserved for the first and second person verb affixes (*e.g.*, 10, 15, 16) and for the demonstratives (*e.g.*, 3, 4); anaphoric function is handled by the verb stem (*cf.* 20, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29), just as it is in attributive predications.

Pronouns convey two kinds of general information. First, they specify an upper bound on the number of referents: there can be no more referents than the number of pronouns.[9] Second, they provide basic semantic or pragmatic information which we call agreement information.[10] As regards deictic reference, the Mayan absolutives and demonstratives parallel English pronouns in conveying both kinds of information. On the other hand, in cases of anaphoric reference, it is the Kekchi verb stem which determines the maximum number of referents: two in the case of transitive stems, and one in the case of intransitives. The third person ergative clitic provides the information that Lyons calls the "descriptive content" (1977: 664), which in Kekchi is minimal. Thus, the transitive stem *il* of *xatril* "he saw you" sets up two references, the clitic *r* tells us that the agent is third person, and the absolutive marker *at* tells us that the patient is second person singular. Any references which are not overtly marked by the inflectional morphology as being first or second person are anaphoric in nature. Hence, *xatril* makes one anaphoric reference. On the other hand, in *xril*, the stem *il* makes two anaphoric references: *r* explicitly marks the agent as third person, and the second anaphor is third person by default.

The formal separation of deictic and anaphoric functions in Mayan reinforces a distinction between grammatical and anaphoric agreement as discussed by Bresnan and Mchombo (1987) in their LFG analysis of Chichewa (Bantu) phenomena. In support of the position that verbal affixes may mark either grammatical agreement (whereby a coreferential NP is a verbal argument) or anaphoric agreement (whereby a coreferential NP is an adjunct[11]), they maintain that these two systems of agreement correlate with discourse,

syntactic, and phonological distinctions in Chichewa. In Kekchi, only the verbal affixes which have deictic function participate in grammatical agreement. This agreement system is highly constrained: any coindexed nominal must be a first or second person demonstrative (*e.g.*, *laa?in* "me" or *laa?at* "you") or a vocative. Other nominals are adjuncts, and they enter solely into relations of anaphoric agreement (6, 7, 8 above; 30, 31 below).

Very few sentences with tensed verbs have two full NPs, and many sentences have no NPs. Even so, the canonical word order of Kekchi is said to be verb-object-subject (VOS) on the basis of utterances such as the following.

(30) *ki-x-k'am caq li-tumin li-c'ina-'al*
AUX-E3-carry back DEF-money DEF-little.boy
"the little boy brought back the money"

However, at this level, the order of constituents is not categorically fixed. In fact, the range of word orders found in a single Kekchi narrative can be nearly exhaustive. In a very long story told by one representative speaker, we find VOS, SVO (*e.g.*, 31), OVS (*e.g.*, 32), VSO (*e.g.*, 33), VO, VS, SV, OV, as well as the shared argument patterns VSV (*e.g.*, 34) and VOSVO, and even the shared verb pattern SVS.

(31) *li-ixq na-r-il-eb li-q-as-q-iiz'in*
DEF-woman AUX-E3-see-PLURAL DEF-E1p-old.brother-
"the woman cures our people" E1p-younger.sibling

(32) *in-lampara t-kw-aj la'in can*
1Es-lamp AUX-1Es-want me QUOTE
"I want my lamp, he said"

(33) *t-aa-taw la'at aa-tyu'am*
AUX-2Es-find you 2Es-life
"you can find your life" ("you can realize your career")

(34) *bwen ki-cal li-q'eq ki-q'aj caq*
okay AUX-come DEF-black AUX-return.home back
"so he came, the black, he went back home"
("so the black man came and went home")

All relative orders of verb complex and nominals are attested, and the placement of nominals is governed by discourse rather than sentence facts. Berinstein's excellent description of Kekchi in Relational Grammar terms discusses constraints on the preposing of ergative nominals; however, they to not seem to apply categorically, and they are compromised by the characterization of preposing function as "contrastive", "emphatic", and "focused" (1984: 21), terms which seem to demand a discourse explication. Thus, the subject and object status of a nominal in a sentence is not encoded by sentence syntax, confirming Kekchi's categorization as a nonconfigurational language. Nonconfigurationality supports the analysis of nominals in tensed verb sentences as adjuncts (Jelinek 1984), and it defeats attempts within Government and

Binding Theory (GB) to assign Case to such nominals without an unwanted proliferation of empty category pronominals (Van Valin 1985). Nominals are seen to be nonarguments (in the GB sense) of a verb; the relation which obtains between a nominal and its associated verb complex is one of antecedent to anaphor.

4. Antecedent placement

With the exception of 14, the examples cited above are complete sentences which could each be felicitously uttered as a turn in a dialogue. We have seen that a tensed Kekchi verb complex always sets up at least one reference and that all third person references made by the verb complex are anaphoric, thus implying that 17, 18, 22, 26, 27, 28, and 29 would be infelicitous were they to occur without an antecedent. In order to appreciate how these examples can be felicitous, we must understand where the antecedents of Kekchi anaphora may occur.

The antecedents of Kekchi verb complexes can occur either within the same intonation group or within a preceding intonation group. They never occur in subsequent intonation groups. An examination of Kekchi texts turns up no violation of these coöccurrence restrictions. In addition, the following extracts illustrate a certain comment-topic structure that pervades Kekchi narrative. Once introduced, either as the second element of an attributive dyad or as an adjunct to a verb complex, a topic nominal is generally not repeated in the subsequent intonation groups of an episode; nevertheless, as an antecedent, it governs the interpretation of subsequent anaphora.

(35) *ma'laqaqa'n*
"a little while later"
naq *x-k'alun* *li-toor*
when AUX-arrive DEF-bull
"when he arrived, the bull"
mas *nim*
very big
"he (the bull) was very big"

(36) *kwayi'* *li-kw-altyox* *comaadr*
here DEF-1Es-godchild comadre
"here is my godson, comadre"
x-tiz' *caq* *can*
AUX-bore back QUOTE
"he (the godson) is bored here, he said"

Newly introduced adjunct nominals function as topic shifters which instantiate new models for the resolution of anaphora.

(37) *komoh* *ki-numkenk* *li-toor*
as AUX-pass DEF-bull
"as he passed, the bull" ("as the bull passed")
ki-jape' *li-ee'*
AUX-open DEF-tree
"the trees were sprung open"
ut
"and"
ki-x-piz' *laj-c'ina-'uc* *aran*
AUX-3E-mash DEF-small-opossum there
"he (the bull) mashed him, little opossum there"
aran *ki-kanah* *ci-tyez'tyoh*
there AUX-stay CI-crushed
"there he (the opossum) stayed crushed"
kiz'koo *'ix-e* *ki-kanah* *aran*
rubbed 3E-mouth AUX-stay there
"with his mouth rubbed open he (the opossum) remained"

When two nominals occur in the same intonation group, one may be repeated in order to diffuse potentially ambiguous anaphora (both women and corn can be nice).

(38) *ut* it li-ixq *na-r-il* *li-k'al*
and DEF-woman AUX-E3-see DEF-corn
"and the woman, she looks at it, the corn"
c'ina-us *li-k'al*
small-good DEF-corn
"it's nice, the corn"
caabil
"it's beautiful" ("the corn is beautiful")
nimqihal *li-hal*
big.ear DEF-ear
"they're big-eared, the ears" ("the ears are big")

5. Hierarchical status of the verb complex

Van Valin (1987), in arguing that GB is an inadequate theory of Universal Grammar (UG), presents data from Lakhota (Siouan) in support of his claim that Lakhota lacks a VP in its syntax.[12] Lakhota is a head-marking language in many ways similar to Kekchi, and two of the arguments against a VP in Lakhota hold also for Kekchi. The syntactically free order of nominal antecedents of Kekchi verb complexes dooms a GB attempt to include both kinds of elements under a VP node (although this would not be a problem for Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar, since it treats relations of immediate

dominance and linear precedence independently). Additionally, the coreference conditions on Kekchi nominals are most simply stated in terms of linear precedence rather than c-command, thus arguing in favor of a discourse-level control mechanism. Van Valin's argument vis-à-vis subject-object extraction asymmetries is not supported by Kekchi patterns, and his argument from weak crossover effects is unconfirmed, but that does not save the Kekchi VP.

Jelinek's observations (1984) on Walpiri and Japanese harmonize with Van Valin's Lakhota discussion, even though the ultimate conclusions (Jelinek is pro-CB) of the two analysts differ. Jelinek proposes that the verbal affixes be analyzed as arguments of the verb (a position with which Van Valin sympathizes). For Walpiri, the verbal affixes are said to "govern" any associated nominal adjuncts. This view, however, cannot be maintained for Kekchi, for we have seen examples (25, 26, 27, and 29) where the affixes fail to determine the maximum number of dependent nominal adjuncts and their case relations. Yet, unlike Japanese, the Kekchi verb complex is the only vehicle of case relation information, and Kekchi nominals are not "Case Particle Phrases". In Kekchi, these nominals are governed by the verb complex as a whole. The nominals are not properly governed "arguments" of the verb, but they do depend on the verb complex for their referential interpretation. Kekchi nominals are not adjuncts of the person markers but are adjuncts of the verb. Therefore, even though it is a nonconfigurational language, Kekchi does not fit the W(alpiri)-type pattern of nonconfigurational languages identified by Jelinek; it is a counterexample to her extended configurationality parameter.

Theoretical extensions along the lines suggested by Jelinek can conceivably counter Van Valin; nevertheless, his discussion is persuassive overall in suggesting GB's explanatory inadequacy as a theory of UG. By highlighting phenomena which do not readily conform to the descriptive patterns of GB, he forces the theorist who would account for the facts of Lakhota, Djirbal, Kekchi, and other languages with "verbal words" to make some hard choices in amending S- and D-structure to handle these cases; otherwise, if it should eventually be accepted that head-marking languages like Kekchi and Lakhota lack a VP, then there would be serious problems for Case theory.

Toward understanding the Mayan system of predication, we have become acquainted with certain facts about Kekchi. In doing so, we have seen that Kekchi person markers underspecify the argument structure of a predication. A distinguishing feature of Kekchi is this referential inadequacy of its person markers, which depend on the transitivity of the verb for their proper interpretation. Full Kekchi nominals, which are unmarked for case, are optional adjuncts to the verb, and their occurrence is determined by nonsyntactic factors. In light of this, we have observed that Kekchi is a nonconfigurational language of a type unlike Walpiri. All nonconfigurational languages must be considered as we refine our descriptions of predication and reference.

FOOTNOTES

1. All short Kekchi citations have been confirmed by Faustino Tush, a speaker from Belize. The longer citations have been taken from the transcribed speech of Guatemalan and Belizean speakers which comprises the Kekchi corpus of the University of Pennsylvania Language Analysis Project, which has supported my research on this language.

2. The transcription of items from Kekchi and other Mayan languages conforms to Guatemala's most recent alphabetic standard, except that *c*, *z*, *'* are written for [tš], [ts], [ʔ], respectively. Non-Mayanists should note that *x* is [š] and *j* is [x]. Person-number abbreviations in glosses conform to the following pattern: 3E "third person ergative", 1Ap "first person plural absolutive", 1s "first person singular"; other abbreviations include AUX "auxiliary", DEF "definite", and QUOTE "quotative".

3. The English utterance *Sweet* (said perhaps in response to the question *How's the cocoa?*) might be analyzed as an elliptical form (perhaps an ellipsis of *It's a little too sweet*). However, an ellipsis analysis does not duck the issue of reference. Assuming that these short utterances truly involve ellipses, a properly articulated theory relating elliptic forms to their fuller counterparts must come to terms with the fact that the two types of forms agree as to the predication they make and to the referred object about which the predication is made.

4. Attributive predications are unmarked for tense, aspect, and mood. Even so, they are here glossed using *is* to avoid a clumsy locution such as *is/was/be*.

5. That is, to the extent that Kekchi's morpho-semantic categories permit; for example, no sex or gender distinctions are grammaticized.

6. Of course, similar examples exist for English and other accusative languages. For instance, the role of *I* in *I hit Bill*, *I walk everyday*, and *I can see* is not constant in terms of commonly encountered case categories such as agent, patient, experiencer, and source.

7. Occasionally, *x-x-kamsih* is pronounced [šškamsh].

8. Linguists occasionally confuse deixis with stressability (*i.e.* the acceptability of phonological stress) and emphasizablity (*i.e.* the ability to highlight a form via either phonological or syntactic strategies). In this connection, we note that the first and second person ergative clitics of Kekchi, of Chorti, of Yucatec, and of other Mayan languages can never bear stress; nevertheless, they are clearly deictics, for their referents lie in the situational context. French subject pronouns are similar in this respect. In the sentence *Je le connais moi*, the clitic *le* makes a clearly anaphoric reference and must have an antecedent in the preceding sentences of a felicitous discourse, and *moi* refers deictically to the speaker. One cannot stress *le*, but stressed *moi* is possible. On the one hand, *je* refers to an entity in the situational context, yet it cannot be stressed. Referentially, *je* is a deictic like *moi*, but phonologically it is like *le*. This is precisely the status of the first and second person ergative clitics in Kekchi.

9. A referent may be dual or plural, but this is not the same thing as there being two or more referents.

10. Such basic information includes categories like person (first, second, third, fourth), number (singular, dual, plural), animacy, and age. In English, *he*, *she*, and *it* mark nonfemale, female, and asexual genders. In Italian, *egli* is marked for male human. The Mayan pronominal categories address person and number.

11. My use of the term "adjunct" here is less strict than theirs. They characterize anaphoric agreement as involving a coreferential NP which is either "an adjunct of the pronominal argument" or "a topic or focus of the clause or discourse structure" (741).

12. I thank Richard Lungstrum for bringing Van Valin's work on Lakhota to my attention.

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